

REMARKS

The above amendments and the following remarks are fully and completely responsive to the Office Action dated December 29, 2004. Claims 1-12 are pending in this application with claim 1 amended by this Preliminary Amendment. In the outstanding Office Action, claims 1-12 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b). No new matter has been added. Claims 1-12 are presented for reconsideration.

35 U.S.C. § 102(b)

Claims 1-12 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Rodriguez-Rodriguez et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,666,676, "Rodriguez"). In making this rejection, the Office Action asserts that this reference teaches each and every element of the claimed invention. Applicants disagree and respectfully request reconsideration of this rejection.

Claim 1, as amended, recites in part:

...an on-off sensor for detecting an opening and closing state of the on-off valve,

wherein the microcomputer performs an operation check of the safety means by compulsorily operating the safety means and receiving an opening and closing state of the on-off valve, before operating the ignition sequence.

Applicants have carefully reviewed Rodriguez and could not find any disclosure or suggestion of an on-off sensor for detecting an opening and closing state of the on-off valve. Similarly, Applicants could not find any disclosure or suggestion that the microcomputer performs an operation check of the safety means by compulsorily

operating the safety means and receiving an opening and closing state of the on-off valve, before operating the ignition sequence.

Accordingly, Rodriguez fails to teach and/or suggest the claimed invention. Specifically, Rodriguez fails to teach and/or suggest an on-off sensor for detecting an opening and closing state of the on-off valve. Rodriguez also fails to teach and/or suggest that the microcomputer performs an operation check of the safety means by compulsorily operating the safety means and receiving an opening and closing state of the on-off valve, before operating the ignition sequence. Therefore, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection of claims 1-12 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b).

Conclusion

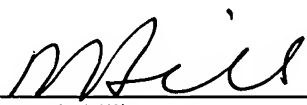
Applicants' remarks have overcome the rejection set forth in the Office Action dated December 29, 2004. Specifically, Applicants' remarks have distinguished claims 1-12 from Rodriguez and thus overcome the rejection of these claims under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b). Accordingly, claims 1-12 are in condition for allowance. Therefore, Applicants respectfully request consideration and allowance of claims 1-12.

Applicants respectfully submit that this application is in condition for allowance and such action is earnestly solicited. If the Examiner believes that anything further is desirable in order to place this application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact Applicants' undersigned representative at the telephone number listed below to schedule a personal or telephone interview to discuss any remaining issues.

Prompt and favorable examination on the merits is respectfully requested.

In the event this paper is not considered to be timely filed, the Applicant respectfully petitions for an appropriate extension of time. Any fees for such an extension, together with any additional fees that may be due with respect to this paper, may be charged to counsel's Deposit Account No. 01-2300, **referencing docket number 024656-00027.**

Respectfully submitted,
ARENT FOX PLLC



Rustan J. Hill
Attorney for Applicants
Registration No. 37,351

Customer No. 004372
1050 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Suite 400
Washington, DC 20036-5339
Telephone: (202) 857-6000

RJH/elz:elp

Enclosure: RCE Transmittal

TECH/289425.1